Sam Manocchio

Period 2, Unit 7

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**Reading Notes Pgs. 445-447**

Introduction

1. During the French Revolution and the turmoil that upheaval spawned, it became customary to refer to the patterns of social, political, and economic relationships that had existed in France before 1789 as the *ancien régime*, or the **Old Regime**
   * Economically, a scarcity of food, the predominance of agriculture, slow transport, a low level of iron production, comparatively unsophisticated financial institutions, and sometimes competitive commercial overseas empires characterized the OLD REGIME

Major Features of Life in the Old Regime

1. Pre-revolutionary Europe was based on **1** aristocratic elites possessing a wide variety in inherited legal privileges, **2** established churches intimately related to the state and the aristocracy; **3** an urban labor force usually organized into guilds; and **4** rural peasantry subject to high taxes and feudal dues

Maintenance of Tradition

1. Both the nobles and peasants repeatedly called for the restoration of traditional rights
   * Nobles asserted what they called their ancient rights against the intrusion of the expanding monarchial bureaucracies
   * Peasants called for the revival or the maintenance of the customary manorial rights that allowed them to access particular lands, courts, or grievance procedures

Hierarchy and Privilege

1. In several continental cities, sumptuary laws regulating the dress of the different classes – forbade persons in one class or occupation from wearing clothes worn like those worn by their social superiors
   * Eighteenth-century Europeans did not enjoy what Americans regard as “individual rights”
   * Privileges in a community might involve exemption from taxation or from some especially humiliating punishment, the right to practice a trade or craft, the right to one’s children to pursue a particular occupation

The Aristocracy

1. The nobility consisted of approximately 1 to 5 percent of the population of any given country
   * Only nobles had any kind of representation in Hungary and Poland
   * In some nations, the nobility fostered economic innovation and embraced the commercial spirit helped protect the nobilities wealth and gave then common interest with the commercial classes

Varieties of Aristocratic Privilege

1. Aristocrat: a matter of birth and legal privilege

British Nobility

* Smallest, wealthiest, best defined, and most socially responsible aristocracy resided in Great Britain – consisted of about 400 families, the eldest male member of each family sat in the **House of Lords**
* These families also controlled many of the seats in the **House of Commons**
* Owned ¼ of all arable land in the country
* **Peerage**: the eldest son inherited the title, the right to sit in the House of Lords

French Nobility

* In France, about 400,000 nobles were divides between noble “of the sword” (military service) or those “of the robe” (servers in the bureaucracy or by having purchased titles)
* Also divide by those who help office or favor with the royal court of Versailles and those who did not
* **Hobereaux**: Provincial nobility
* Nobles were also exempt from many taxes – most French nobles did not pay the ***taille*** (land tax – the basic tax of the Old Regime); also not liable for the royal ***corvées*** (forced labor on public works)
* Nobles were liable for the payment of the ***vingtième*** (like an income tax) but rarely had to pay it in full

Eastern European Nobilities

* Polish nobles: *szlachta*, entirely exempt from taxes after 1741
* Until 1768: nobles possessed the right of life or death over their serfs
* **Prince Esterhazy of Hungary**: the wealthiest of the Polish Nobles, owner 10 million acres of land
* Prussia: after the accession **Fredrick the Great**, the position of the Junker nobles became much stronger